8:Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

boys tell all sorts of stories, especially about women, they discuss love-making and women, and tell tales of their own conquests. The younger ones listen to these things and that is all right in the boys' village, that is how we learn. But we compare in our minds and think that if a boy stays at home it is as if he listened to all this from his parents, and people always do talk lewdly at night; and that is very bad, that is foolishness.—But in the boys' village it is good for the young ones to listen, that is how children grow up."

On another occasion when I told this same man that in Europe many people thought it a good thing for boys to get sexual instruction from their parents and teachers he was shocked: "But I think it is impossible" he protested "for parents to go into detail with their children; there is too much shame on both sides. And if they did, it would damage the children's respect for them."

There is thus a correlation in this society between the age-village system at its genesis and the belief that a boy's dawning interest in sex must be informed, not by his parents, but by friends only a little older than himself.

Few men marry before twenty-five years of age, but affairs with girls begin before puberty. All affairs are related in detail to friends in the age-village, and the younger ones learn by listening; and they also learn when the older boys send them as messengers to the girls of their fancy.

Besides the more serious love affairs which are carried on in secret, groups of boys from the same age-village commonly flirt with any girls they meet on the way, and it is then that the incest taboos are learnt. If one of the boys is known to be related to one of the girls, either through a common grandfather or great-grandfather, his companions send him away: "Don't you see your sister is here? You cannot come!"

Contrary to a general belief about "primitive" societies, homosexual intercourse is common in the boys' villages, between close friends, but there is no real perversion; homosexuality is said to be always *faute de mieux*. The older men in discussion dismiss it with the tolerant word "adolescence," it is never continued after marriage, and all except the feeble-minded get married sooner or later.

But life in a boys' village also gives its members much information and wisdom unconnected with sex. There, as we have seen, boys perfect their skill in building, and there also they learn to argue and express themselves with adult fluency. It is characteristic of the Nyakyusa legal

8: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936) 1936 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

621 868 867 system that small cases between neighbours are always first discussed and often finally settled in the presence of some friend or friends who act as arbitrators, without recourse to the constituted political authorities. Small disputes about petty theft, the possession of a cloth or some coppers, the ownership of a banana stem and so on, are as frequent in the boys' village as elsewhere, and as elsewhere the people concerned often argue it out to a finish before some friend or neighbour. And by listening to such disputes, or participating in them either as judge or principal, the boys acquire rhetorical skill and some knowledge of law. In some boys' villages there is a recognized leader appointed by the political authorities of the chiefdom to settle graver disputes, in others there is not. The position of such a leader, where there is one, will be discussed later.

577 621 Above all the boys' village gives to its members the conversation and company of more of their own contemporaries than did the group of herd boys, and company the Nyakyusa hold to be the greatest of educators. In the most explicit discourse I heard on the value of company my informant explained that cleanliness, together with rhetorical and conversational skill, were all learned in company. These are his exact words: "We say that it is by conversing with our friends that we gain wisdom; it is bad to sit quite silent always in men's company. A man who does this seems to us a fool, he learns no wisdom, he has only his own thoughts. And a man who does not spend time with other people is always dirty, he does not compare himself with any friend. We say that we learn cleanliness of body in company, the dirty ones learn from their more cleanly friends. Again if a man is accused to the chief and is unable to defend himself easily and with eloquence we mock at him and say: 'What is the matter with you? Do you live all by yourself? How is it that you are so foolish?' We think that wisdom and cleanliness are the two great things learnt in company. We think it is bad to live alone far from other people, such a man learns nothing; he never learns to express himself well, to converse pleasantly with friends or to argue a case with eloquence. It is better to live with other people."

621 561 At first the sons of the parent village continue to join the boys' village as they grow up; but after some years, when the senior members of the boys' village are about seventeen or eighteen years old, the younger ones begin to be refused admittance to the village: "they are children." The young ones then either begin a new age-village of their own, or else join a village which has already been started by the sons of a nearby men's village a little junior to that of their own fathers. If you enquire who are the members of such and such a boys' village you are always told that they are the sons of a particular village of men, but detailed investiga-

9: Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

643 622 796 often leaks out, but in theory the young men must not know, and those seized always put up a show of resistance before being bundled into the hut of the senior heir's mother. Once there, no man dare flee lest, like a Lwembe fleeing from the stool, he should [784] die. The two heirs are seized also and carried into the hut with their headmen. A litter is spread for them, and they remain there in complete seclusion, required to 'talk softly' and avoid quarrelling, guarded by the 'doctor of the coming out' and forbidden to wash except that each of the chiefs and his senior village headman washes with medicines in the doorway of the hut. Each chief also lies down with a commoner and is covered with a black cloth [789] which, according to Mwandisi (the old blind chief 107) is a symbol of clouds and therefore of plenty. 'It means, may it be heavy—cloudy—above, may food be plentiful; may both heirs bring fruitfulness.' The commoner who lies with the chief is 'one body with him', 'his wife', and continues through life to share with him certain medicines. Some said that the senior village headman performs this function for his chief: others that it is another man altogether. The whole matter is very secret and our information is limited. The period of seclusion varies. Mwanyilu (177), who 'came out' in 1953, remained in the hut a month, and he complained most bitterly of the inconvenience of not washing for so long. During this time the young men are admonished by [867] their fathers' senior village headmen, and told of their faults and their future duties. According to Mwambuputa (Mwankuga's [150] senior headman who was responsible for bringing out Mwanyilu), he said: 'Listen to the people: they are the real chiefs! Be hospitable! Greet people politely! Don't beat your men!' And the other senior headman, Kakuju, said: 'Do not beat your men, respect them! Feed your people on milk, meat, chickens, beer! Fear your people!'

Then the great moment, from which the ritual takes its name, arrives. Very early in the morning a crowd gathers and a junior kinsman of the chief knocks on the door and shouts: 'Come out! War has come!' Each heir, followed by his senior headman, [778] rushes out and grasps the 'spear of chieftainship' held ready at the doorway for him, while the headman grasps a medicated zebra tail. The spear has a little horn of medicines bound to it 'to show that the chief has come out', and brandishing it is 'comparable to carrying the chief aloft. We show his greatness to the people and acclaim him.' 'The spear of chieftainship is strength, man-

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

sitting there on the yard got up, as quickly as possible held her hands before her eyes and rushed off. This was because this man was her father-in-law. The strict social tabu in such circumstances is well know[22].

The next act consisted in shaving the girl's hair on her temples by the *unnyago;* the father was shaved by a younger brother of his in the same manner. (I cannot remember whether it was also the case with the mother of the girl.)

The old fashioned hut of the chief's wife.

Then the further ceremony took place again inside the hut. All the participants sat down on mats, and the *unnyago* accepted the complaints of the parents on the former conduct of their daughter. Sometimes the discussion between these parties, where the *unnyago* played the role of a mediator as is the case with the *unjobi* (or speaker) in the court, reached such a pitch of excitement that I thought a serious quarrel had broken out. The excitement was, perhaps, only of a ceremonial character; I was told, however, that in former times corporeal punishment has been inflicted, if, indeed, the girl had shown misconduct in the times before.

Next, the girl was instructed by the *unnyago* in her duties as a wife. These instructions were of a theoretical or moral nature concerning the correct conduct of the girl towards her parents also after the ceremony and towards her future husband. The practical part of the initiation instructions sometimes comes before this ceremony at the end of initiation. These practical instructions cover the preparing of food

[22] Cf. *Merensky*, p. 125; *Mackenzie*, p. 108 (at Karonga?). According to *Merensky* the daughter-in-law has to observe this tabu also towards the brethren of her father-in-law. All these persons are named *ukamoana*.

13: Lehmann E-5 (1939)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

and other duties applicable to a girl after marriage. The practical instruction takes place in or before a special hut in the village under the leadership of the *ebanyago (avanyago)*. The girl is admonished by the *nnnyago* to obey her parents without any delay, to perform the commands of her mother immediately, e. g. to clean the hut, and especially to show obedience when guests are present. Should the mother blame her daughter unjustly, she should not reply. (The girl had been blamed in the earlier discussion that she had not swept the hut when her mother required her to do it). Then her duties and conduct towards her future husband were inculcated. As a wife she must never accept anything from the hands of her husband without kneeling and stretching out both hands, and turning away her face with eyes cast down. Also as a wife she must not hold her head up

Some of the drummers.

when she is addressed by a man. As a wife she must be anxious to prepare her husband's meal always at the right time, that means, it has to be ready when her husband returns from the field. If she sees her husband coming from the field, then she has to go to meet him, and take his hatchet from him. Should her husband scold her, she is not to reply; but she may ask her neighbours for help. It is one of her duties to take care of the regular cleaning of the hut[23]. The ashes must always be removed by her from the fireplace. If there are only a few ashes on the fireplace she must remove them with her hands[24].

[23] The place near the house where the sweepings are thrown down is called *urutagililo*.

[24] Cf. *Mackenzie*, p. 51, who refers to such moral instructions connected with puberty customs, probably at Karonga; cf. *Fülleborn*, p. 359 (Nygonde plain).

13:Lehmann E-5 (1939) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

After these admonitions, the mats which the girl had manufactured were inspected. During this examination it was told her that a wife should be seen in the possession of as many beautiful mats as possible, made by her for herself and for her husband. Should the girl reveal such conduct as a wife, *ubusangalufu* (happiness) would be in her hut.

When the proper ceremony seemed to have come to an end, another discussion followed. The girl had told the *unnyago*, during the above mentioned admonition, that her parents also sometimes exchanged angry words. Therefore, a new discussion between the father and the mother arose, in which also the *unnyago* was the "speaker", but the other participants of the ceremony also shared in it, and the discussion too became at times heated. Still, after about 15 minutes, it suddenly came to an end, and the matter in dispute was declared settled. With this the whole ceremony ended.

8. One day I asked the chief for permission to visit his huts. He dwelt in a rectangular hut *(ikibaga)*. A very beautiful *ikitara* (bed) was in the main room, composed of many sleeping mats *(ubuleli*, pl. *imileli)* and of big round wooden blocks (sections of a tree-trunk), one at the head and a smaller one at the foot of the bed. Each of the four fine mats which lay uppermost had a special name. All the mats rested on sticks of reed laid across beams lying on smaller poles on the floor[21]. These mats were naturally of nearly the same height as the wooden block which formed the head part of the *ikitara*. In some other old-fashioned and better houses in Nyakyusa villages, similar beds were to be seen, but generally the bedsteads are much more simple.

One of the most important permissions granted me by the chief was to enter the "store room", connected with his main room by a door. The objects to be seen here were the same as those to be found in other huts or store-rooms, e. g. the big *ifituba* (baskets) for storing grain, up to four feet high, smeared over with cow-dung and clay, and smaller baskets for different purposes. In one corner hung different kinds of dancing fans *(urukope*, sg.) made of hairs from the tails of bulls, with fine handles of horn. In the dark opposite corner of the same wall there seemed to hang a similar object, but it was wrapped in banana bast. This was the real sign of the chief's dignity, the symbol of his authority and power, named *ubuswigala*. A long discussion was needed to induce the chief to unveil it. Only by constantly consulting by glances the present *amafumu* the chief slowly unveiled it. He told us that

[21] Cf. Fülleborn, p. 381.